

THE *Hollywood* **REPORTER**

THR.COM/BUSAN

BUSAN

DAILY
No 5

OCTOBER
8, 2013



The chair on the left ...

has been occupied by a long and distinguished list of directors, including Werner Herzog, Ridley Scott, Oliver Stone, Wong Kar-Wai, Luc Besson, Danny Boyle, Roger Spottiswoode, Brian De Palma, Renny Harlin, Michael Cimino, Todd Phillips, George Lucas and Sylvester Stallone.

All have filmed in Thailand, and with their support, Thailand has developed the skills, infrastructure and talent to meet the creative needs of the most demanding production.



The chair on the right ... is waiting for you.



THAILAND FILM OFFICE

THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

OCTOBER 8, 2013 | THR.COM/BUSAN | BUSAN | No.5

BUSAN
WEATHER
AND HIGH
TEMPS

TODAY
77° F
25° C

TOMORROW
78° F
26° C

New Buyers Boost Busan Dealmaking

By Clifford Coonan and
Lee Hyo-won

A more diverse pool of buyers will boost the Asian Film Market at the Busan International Film Festival, attendees say, as new exhibitors joined the line-up in the Bexco trade market.

“Meetings are going well as usual, though with the same group of people and everyone we expect to see here. The good thing is that organizers have been trying to reach out to new buyers, and we hope to see a more diverse pool,” says **Jung Soojin**, VP

Asian
Film
Market

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‘Ratings Were Created Out of Fear,’ Says Kim Ki-duk

By Lee Hyo-won

In light of the controversy surrounding his latest release, the violent yet grimly funny *Moe-bius*, South Korean maverick director **Kim Ki-duk** came out strongly against the a film rating system, even though he admitted he will be screening the censored version of the film in Busan.

“You live only once, and there are already a lot of other films geared toward

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Devgan, left, and Rampal form an alliance to fight corruption.

The Protest

Prakash Jha's big-budget political thriller fails to answer its own questions about how the Indian political landscape can be transformed BY CLARENCE TSUI

The austerity of truth is better than the grandeur of lies,” says a police captain who, in one of *The Protest's* most dramatic scenes, decides to abandon his official post to join the anti-corruption public movement at the center of the film. It's a line director (and co-screenwriter) Prakash Jha should have dwelled on more in his latest \$7.7 million political epic. While boasting top-notch production values rivaling any of his Bollywood peers, the film flounders as it stretches itself too thin over too many story threads and also ideological underpinnings.

It's perhaps a surprise that the film found its way into the Busan International Film Festival's program, since even Indian audiences have seemingly

seen through the weaknesses of the film. Despite boasting an A-list cast — including Abhishek Bachchan, Kareena Kapoor and Ajay Devgan — and a story seeking to tap into public discontent about the political establishment, the film saw below-par financial returns and mixed notices at home. It's unlikely that *The Protest* will be gaining further traction in overseas markets anytime soon.

As Bollywood productions go, the film's technical aspects are nearly impeccable with its colossal scenes of explosive public uproar — most transformed into de rigueur all-out musical numbers, of course — and also the obligatory whoozy romantic scenes. Meanwhile, Jha and co-writer Anjum Rajabali have conjured

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

OPENING DOORS



meet the european film industry

at the Asian Film Market
October 7-10, 2013

EUROPE'S UMBRELLA STAND F23
at BEXCO (Centum area)

Austria
EastWest FilmDistribution

Ireland
Irish Film Board

Denmark
TrustNordisk
LevelK

Italy
Fandango
Intramovies
Istituto Luce-Cinecittà

France
Bac Films Distribution
Capricci
Celluloid Dreams
Doc & Film International
Films Distribution
Gaumont
Kinology
Le Pacte
Les Films du Losange
Memento Films
Premium Films
REEL SUSPECTS
uniFrance films
Urban Distribution International
Versatile
Wide House
WIDE
Wild Bunch

Poland
New Europe Film Sales

Serbia
Film Center Serbia

Spain
Film Factory Entertainment
Latido

Sweden
Swedish Film Institute

Sweden / Finland
The Yellow Affair

Switzerland
Swiss Films

United Kingdom
Taskovski Films
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Films Boutique
m-appeal world sales
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Dealmaking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of International Business at Showbox/Mediaplex.

The scale of the event has gotten bigger this year, with the number of participants jumping from 51 booths from 17 countries last year to 75 booths from 19 countries this year. There is also a bigger number of post-production studios and VFX companies taking part.

Kini Kim, head of international sales and distribution at CJ E&M, says the Busan market is becoming more important, reflecting the growing importance of the Asian film industry.

"Busan has such a good combination of programming and a market. AFM is only a market so it's very boring. Here people go to a screening and share information, that's the beauty of this festival," Kim says.

However, the fact that



The Asian Film Market, held at Bexco, has seen a rise in attendance by post-production and VFX companies.

BY THE NUMBERS

75

BOOTHS
up from 51
last year

19

COUNTRIES
up from 17
last year

the Busan market overlapped with MIPCOM in Cannes was a problem as it meant many buyers couldn't make it, he adds.

As well as regular visitors including Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and New Zealand, the Royal Film Commission of Jordan has set up a booth in Busan this year.

Isabelle Glachant, who is co-producing *Sex Appeal* with first-time director **Wang Wei-ming**, says the market was a great place for East-West networking. "You can gauge potential and get feedback. This is my first

Taiwanese project, usually I do Mainland Chinese films, so I can see what possibilities are there," she says.

Maxine Williamson, who is director of the Awards Competition at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in Brisbane, says she was struck by how Busan has become the "content city" of Korea. "Our business here at the market has been meetings and sales agents-focused," she says. "It's remarkable what they have achieved with the market," she says.

— PARK SOO-MEE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT

Kim Ki-duk

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

larger audiences," Kim said Sunday during an open talk session. "I believe there are many secrets in life and I want to explore these without worrying about ratings. Ratings were created by society out of fear for the unknown."

The Venice Lion-winning director of *Pieta* wasn't finished, going on to express his frustrations with conventional filmmaking. "The thing about mainstream cinema is that it operates toward a very clear goal — a high-profile cast [that will] garner 5 to 10 million admissions. It's a difficult place for someone who ... wants to take on challenges."

Ultimately, he said he believes filmmaking should be about passion, not box office receipts. "You can hear heartbeats onscreen when watching movies that are made from the heart. I don't think about audience sizes, investment, or distribution. I concentrate on the scenario." **THR**

Thailand Heats Up as International Shooting Location

By Patrick Brzeski

Despite looming threats of regional competition, Thailand's film crews and facilities continue to attract a record-breaking number of Hollywood and international productions. In 2009, there were a record-breaking 500 foreign TV and film productions shot in Thailand. That number has been eclipsed each year since and the Thailand Film Office predicts the yearly total to grow to as many as 700 international shoots this year. The revenue generated by foreign film work in the country is also on the rise, from \$29 million (900 million baht) in 2009, to roughly double that figure this year.



IN FOCUS:
THAILAND

Pee Mak Phra Khanong

"In spite of increased competition for international productions, we are extremely pleased that Thailand remains the premier choice for filmmakers in the region," says **Ubolwan Sucharitakul**, director of the Thailand Film Office.

In an effort to maintain its competitiveness, at the inaugural Thailand Film Destination Festival held in Bangkok in April, guest location managers from several Hollywood studios repeatedly told their hosts that despite the country's many attractive attri-

butes for movie shoots, without a tax incentive, it will soon fall behind.

Meanwhile, domestic Thai production companies are beginning to look abroad — particularly China — for their own growth. Local studio, GTH, whose comedy horror *Pee Mak Phra Khanong* smashed Thailand's all-time domestic box office record earlier this year with a \$35 million gross — recently announced that it is developing a Chinese-language thriller for the Chinese market with producer-director mega-star **Stephen Chow**. Thailand has never had one of its films receive a mainstream wide release in the world's number two movie market, but with the backing of a consummate China insider such as Chow — whose *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons* became the second-highest grossing film ever in China at \$206 million this year — a change appears immanent. **THR**

No.1 in Taiwan box office for 4 consecutive weeks!
Box office accumulated more than USD 10 M



BUSAN
International
Film Festival

Official Selection - **Open Cinema**



8th Oct (Tue) 17:30
@ LOTTE CINEMA Centum City 10

Festival Screening

9th Oct (Wed) 20:00 @ BIFF Theater
10th Oct (Thu) 13:00 @ CGV Centum City Starium
11th Oct (Fri) 20:00 @ MEGABOX Haeundae 7

ZONE PRO SITE

THE
A CHEN YU-HSUN
FILM
**MOVEABLE
FEAST.**

LIN MEI-HSIU

YO YANG

KIMI HSIA

ASIA IN BRIEF

HOLLYWOOD STARS DESCEND ON CHINESE AWARDS SHOW

China's Huading Awards, the vote-based awards show that celebrates top Chinese talent in athletics and entertainment,



Cage

got a big Hollywood boost Monday night in its attempt to establish itself as China's

answer to the Oscars. **Quentin Tarantino, Nicole Kidman, Nicolas Cage, Sam Worthington, and Jeremy Irons**, all walked the red carpet at the awards gala held at the Venetian Macao Casino.

SINGAPORE JOINS ATF EVENTS SLATE

MIPAcademy Singapore, a one-day event on non-scripted formats and factual programming, will make its debut at this year's Asia TV Forum & Market in December. The program includes a full-day suite of master classes held as part of the ATF conference slate, and it is scheduled on the last day of the conference on Dec. 6 2013.

WOODY FIRED UP OVER ANTI SMOKING AD

Blue Jasmine didn't release in India over the weekend as planned, after director **Woody Allen** refused to accommodate the Indian government's mandatory anti-smoking ads. Before every movie — both Indian and foreign — an anti-tobacco ad by the Ministry of Health is screened depicting the hazards of smoking, while during screenings, an anti-tobacco text message is inserted on scenes showing characters smoking. "Due to content in the film, it cannot be shown in India in its intended manner. Therefore, the film is not scheduled to play there," a spokesman for Allen's publicists 42 West was also quoted stating. **THR**

Teng Huatao

The Chinese helmer discusses why he followed up his 2011 blockbuster *Love is Not Blind* with the Nepal-set Busan market title *Up in the Wind*

By Clifford Coonan

IN 2011, DIRECTOR TENG HUATAO collaborated with writer Bao Jingjing to write *Love is Not Blind*, a romantic comedy that cost just nine million yuan (\$1.47 million) but yielded \$57.5 million, which is quite a return. This year Teng and Bao are at the Busan International Film Festival to promote their latest outing, *Up in the Wind*, an exotic journey which takes them to Nepal.

One of the prominent figures among the so-called 6th generation of Chinese filmmakers, Teng is known for his high style and his willingness to examine social issues in contemporary China.

A graduate of the Beijing Film Academy, he quickly became a popular TV director, before making his feature debut with the teenage drama *One Hundred* (2001), followed by the romance drama *Sky of Love* in 2003. In 2007, he directed the horror drama *The Matrimony* featuring a high-profile cast including Leon Lai, Rene Liu and Fan Bingbing.

He is known for his keen characterizations of the concerns of Chinese young people, and how they deal with the fast pace of change in contemporary China. He is aware of his demographic — young urbanites — who are often overlooked by filmmakers in China. He released *Love is Not Blind* on Singles Day in 2011, a neat marketing trick that helped it to become one of the most successful Chinese movies of all time. In *Up in the Wind*, a food columnist and spoiled rich kid join a travel tour to Nepal, a country with a high happiness index, prompting a quest for happiness and self-discovery.

Your last movie was made with 9 million yuan but eventually took in 352 million yuan. Did you feel any pressure there?

No. My works have no direct relation with box office figures.

Tell me a little bit about the film.

The Chinese society we are in now is in a state of anxiety and unhappiness. The idea behind *Up in the Wind* is to explore the reasons of the worries but the film in itself may not be able to give an answer.



The movie comes from Bao Jingjing's novel. Why did you decide to work together again?

The original online novel was called "A travelogue or a guidebook." With our production in this case, it didn't come about that after Bao Jingjing wrote the novel, she then gave it to me to make it into a film. Instead, we chatted about the theme of *Up in the Wind* and decided to go to Nepal to make the film, and then she went to Nepal to take a look. After a couple of changes, she wrote the novel and published it online in serial form and then it was adapted into a script.

Your movies have strong stories. Do you think people in the Chinese industry appreciate how important a good story is to making a great movie?

Actually all of my works have no stories of common sense.

How has the Chinese industry changed in the years since you made *The Matrimony* in 2007?

Before *Love is not Blind*, there were not too many changes in the industry, so I think it was fun. I left the film industry in 2006 and worked on TV series for five years and then when I came back to make films, I realized there was no change at all. After *Love is not Blind*, Chinese films changed a lot as everybody knows. I won't say too much here. **THR**

REVIEWS



Bollywood superstar Bachchan, left, couldn't help *The Protest* at the Indian box office.

The Protest

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

relentless drama, drawing on personality conflicts between Bachchan's upstanding teacher Dwarka Anand and his protégé Manav Raghvendra played by Devgan.

The political-thriller element of the drama begins when Dwarka's son is killed in a freak traffic accident. Dwarka's

run-in with a corrupt local official over his son's death soon snowballs into a widespread anti-graft movement, led by Manav — whose about face from greedy entrepreneur to conscientious activist is never really properly explained.

And however much the film seems to be about people power — one of the central songs in the film is Janta Rocks, or "The Public Rocks" — Jha's film remains firmly entrenched in commercial Indian cinema's star-driven mythology. *The Protest* is all about one man's stand: its moral seems to be how the masses are inherently a mob-in-waiting and are not to be trusted, while younger generations will simply resort to crooked ways in order to attain their goals.

To make matters worse, some of the potentially interesting questions about how social activism is to engage with real politics, as proffered in the film's final half hour, are never really properly addressed. It's all a tad too much, resulting in a mass entertainment exercise that ultimately buckles under the weight of its own murky ambitions.

Window on Asian Cinema

Cast Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Arjun Rampal, Manoj Bajpayee, Amrita Rao

Director Prakash Jha

153 minutes

Big Bad Wolves

A revenge-minded father and a vigilante cop pursue an alleged serial killer in this gripping thriller from Israel BY FRANK SCHECK

A driven cop and revenge-seeking father team up to deliver vigilante justice to an alleged child-killer in *Big Bad Wolves*, Aharon Keshales and Navot Papushado's grippingly suspenseful film.

After a little girl goes missing in the woods and is later found dead with her head missing and her underwear pulled down to her ankles, renegade cop Miki (Lior Ashkenazi) enlists two thugs to beat up his principal suspect for a series of related killings, seemingly mild-mannered schoolteacher Dror (Rotem Keinan). The violent mayhem is captured by an interloper's cellphone camera, with the video going viral on the internet. Officially suspended but subtly encouraged to keep up with the case by his commander, Miki continues to harass and stalk Dror, even going so far as to Taser the hapless suspect's small dog. But his activities are suddenly interrupted by the murder victim's middle-aged father

Gidi (Tzahi Grad), who overcomes both men and brings them to the basement of the remote new house he's purchased just for the occasion.

Desperately wanting to know the location of his daughter's severed head, Gidi brutally tortures Dror with Miki's tacit approval. But when things threaten to get out of hand and Miki begins having second thoughts, he finds himself bound and gagged as well. The tense situation becomes even



Grad is on the hunt for his daughter's killer.

more complicated with the unexpected arrival of Gidi's elderly father (Dov Glickman), who comes bearing chicken soup only to wind up becoming involved in the nefarious goings-on.

The filmmakers slowly but surely ratchet up the tension in brilliantly subtle fashion, delivering both a haunting meditation on the morality and efficacy of torture — suspect's guilt is not established, which only increases the moral ambiguity — and enough violent shocks to please genre fans. The plot's intricate twists and turns are consistently surprising, as are the wonderfully droll touches of humor sprinkled into the proceedings.

Featuring superb performances by the principal actors, *Big Bad Wolves* is mesmerizing from start to finish, including a haunting final image that you'll find impossible to forget.

World Cinema

Cast Lior Ashkenazi, Tzahi Grad, Rotem Keinan, Dov Glickman, Menashe Noy, Dvir Benedek

Directors/screenwriters

Aharon Keshales, Navot Papushado
110 min

Toilet Blues

Aggressively artistic and achingly static festival fare that says nothing new

BY ELIZABETH KERR

From the cold open beginning involving the movies' least sexy use of a popsicle, *Toilet Blues* from Indonesia signals its status as an exemplar of BIFF's New Currents programming. It has all the hallmarks of a New Currents film — the minimal shots, prosaic action with pretensions to depth and the pacing of a chain link fence going rusty.

The film kicks off with platonic friends Anjani (Shirley Anggranini, whose aggravating haircut signals "rebellious") and Anggalih (Tim Matindas), or Lih, on the train heading nowhere in particular (of course). She's run away from home after having her honor be-

smirched and he's heading to a seminary to become a monk. Over the course of their trip, Anjani repeatedly tries to seduce the naïve Lih and holds him personally responsible for her happiness and salvation. His response to this is to distance himself from her, both emotionally and physically. On their heels is Ruben (Tio Pakusadewo), a cohort of Anjani's father whose job it is to keep tabs on her.

Toilet Blues is an episodic march into adulthood, but it's a leaden march that's too familiar to be truly engaging. It has its share of tropes that would be best laid to rest, among them the kindly



Matindas, left, has a dalliance with a prostitute.

prostitute who exposes Lih to a touch of carnal pleasure and the languid tone that often defines Southeast Asian cinema. The meat of co-writer-director Dirmawan Hatta's ideas shine through in stilted conversations between the two travelers, which more often than not end with them staring into the distance or her storming off. There are not real revelations or epiphanies, making

most of *Toilet Blues* an exercise in navel-gazing. By the time the delicately symbolic foot washing that closes the film rolls around, it's hard to recall what came before, and even harder to care.

New Currents

Cast Shirley Anggranini, Tim Matindas, Tio Pakusadewo

Director Dirmawan Hatta
87 minutes

Jal (Water)

An ambitious debut suffers from a rare affliction — an abundance of style combined with too much substance

BY ELIZABETH KERR

The search for and control of precious, life-giving water is at the heart of *Jal*, a breathtakingly photographed tragedy of Shakespearean proportions. Set in the arid, harsh environment of Gujarat state, rookie filmmaker Girish Malik takes the approach that more is better; the "if you throw enough at the wall something will stick" philosophy of directing. To that end there are segments of *Jal* that just don't work, but there are just as many that do, even when the film's construction is occasionally bogging.

Bakka (a sometimes hammy Purab H Kohli) has convinced the residents of his village that he is a divine dowser with a special gift for locating that most precious of resources: water.

Bakka's community exists in one of the driest parts of India, and finding a viable well is crucial. It's also something an enemy village possesses and is willing to kill to protect. While Bakka and his town struggle with the issue, Russian animal activist, Kim (who is the embodiment of irritating activists, played by Saidah Jules) shows up asking for Bakka's help in finding fresh water to save flamingoes that are dying in the area. A diesel pump is shipped to an area near the village for the birds, but no consideration is given



Kohli is dragged through the desert for his crimes.

to the thirsty villagers. Then the drama really starts. The rival town's most vocal critic of Bakka, Puniya (Mukul Dev, who has an evil dude laugh for the ages), conspires to destroy Bakka, and tragedy ultimately befalls his wife, Kesar (the luminous Kirti Kulhari).

There's a lot of story here, tackling everything from ambition, greed, power, inequality and ecology in its strangely choppy and slightly schizoid narrative; the film whiplashes between affecting set pieces (Bakka dragged across the dusty land as punishment for perceived thievery) and utter nonsense — such as when Kim nearly starts a gang war by stealing from the rival town's well. *Jal* is frequently saved though by excellent cinematography from Sunita Radia and a typically stirring Bollywood-esque soundtrack by Sonu Nigam and Bickram Ghosh.

New Currents

Cast Purab H Kohli, Tannishtha Chatterjee, Kirti Kulhari

Director Girish Malik
117 minute



Kidd, right, suddenly starts speaking Burmese.

The Isthmus

A well-meaning but tepid debut feature that chronicles the lives of Burmese illegal immigrants living in southern Thailand

BY CLARENCE TSUI

With its story about a career-minded Thai woman trying to sever her daughter's ties with her recently deceased Burmese maid, *The Isthmus's* title could well be taken as a metaphor for this attempt by a mother to reconnect with her child. But the title for Sopawan Boonnimitra and Peerachai Kerdsint's directorial debut turns out to be more literal, with the film offering merely a snapshot of Burmese illegal immigrants living on the Thai part of the land bridge shared by the two countries.

The Isthmus begins with the young girl (played by Marisa Kidd) being ferried by her mother Da (Sangthong Gate-U-Thong) to the region where their helper, Gee, used to live. The trip was born out of Da's fears that the maid's spirit has taken over her daughter, who has suddenly switched to speaking only Burmese.

As the film proceeds, however, the pair are relegated to the sidelines as the Burmese villagers take over the narrative. Amidst an abundance of furrowed brows, listless feet, vague hints of painful recent episodes in Burmese history (the deadly typhoon Nargis; the Buddhist-Muslim religious clashes) and seemingly meaningful chit-chat about living lives where one "prepares for everything and nothing."

It's a film which explores inexplicable presences and absences — it's about identities in flux, as bodies are "invaded" (as in Hom's case, or in the mention of Gee's sister having contracted AIDS) or in the occupation of spaces (with the villagers, whose lives are about being aliens in their host country). But one cannot drive this theme along solely on melancholy. Ultimately, *The Isthmus* offers too much emotion and a wafer-thin treatise that doesn't support a very tangible socio-political issue.

New Currents

Cast Sangthong Gate-U-Thong, Marisa Kidd

Directors Sopawan Boonnimitra, Peerachai Kerdsint
90 minutes

Shuttlecock

A Roadtrip that aims for relational insight but winds up simply aimless BY ELIZABETH KERR

A teenaged boy that recently lost his parents in an accident hits the road in search of the half-sister that took off with an insurance payout in *Shuttlecock*, a road movie that goes, ironically, nowhere. Toggling between traditional indie single frame composition and now requisite hand held cinematography (often underexposed), Lee Yu-bin's directorial debut has the nugget of an engaging family drama from a fresh perspective (kids, no parents) but it's buried beneath unappealing characters and pedestrian aesthetics.

Shuttlecock (for those unfamiliar with low-impact net sports, a shuttlecock is a birdie) begins with home movie-type images of a girl seemingly enjoying a spring evening with an unseen companion. That girl turns out to be Eun-joo (Kong Ye-ji), recently vanished with a pile of inheritance money from the death of her parents. The companion turns out to be Min-jae (Lee Ju-seung), her brother and a reprehensible brat who's now looking for her. He heads south from Seoul one morning to find her, despite the fact he can barely drive, only to discover their little brother, Eun-ho (Kim Tae-yong), stowed away in the car. He's not happy but has no choice but to take Eun-joo along.

Too long by at least twenty minutes and lacking a central character that is either empathetic or sympathetic, writer-director Lee meanders from one moment to the next as Min-jae and Eun-ho wander from one town and dead



Lee searches for his missing sister.

end job to the next looking for Eun-joo. We're subjected to roughly an hour of Min-jae threatening to abandon Eun-ho at the side of road (the result of one such incident is the little boy becoming the victim of a homophobic hate crime), and no amount of bonding through badminton with the younger brother is going to make Min-jae appealing.

Adding insult to injury, he's not a clearly drawn enough character to even understand his resistance to showing a touch of compassion. When the sibling reunion finally happens it's more antagonism and bitterness: Eun-joo is pregnant, the money is gone, and like any good Korean melodrama, the specter of some kind of sexual impropriety has to rear its ugly head. Min-jae finally comes to grips with losing his sister, but it takes another hour to accept truly gaining a brother, which is the only shred of hopefulness *Shuttlecock* musters.

Korean Cinema Today

Cast Lee Ju-seung, Kim Tae-yong, Kong Ye-ji

Director Lee Yu-bin
107 minutes

10 Minutes

Pedestrian workplace dynamics are front and center in Lee Yong-seung's painfully average drama

BY ELIZABETH KERR

If *The Office* were transplanted to Korea and stripped of any humor or irony, the result might be *10 Minutes*, a pedestrian if inoffensive story about the trickle down of failure, the pressures of professional success and the clash between fulfillment and duty. Visually unarresting and slightly lethargic in its storytelling, the film's subject matter is ripe for the picking, but director Lee Yong-seung only skims the surface of Korean workplace dynamics.

As an intern in the media department of a government agency, Ho-chan (Baek Jong-hwan) is also the young breadwinner in his family. Struggling financially and perpetually on the lookout for quick

answers and dodging bill collectors, the family's fractious and demanding nature puts all sorts of stress on Ho-chan and his family, which he bears with silent obligation. But work isn't so bad. Ho-chan is a hit with his co-workers and seems to be on the fast track to a full time job, when out of nowhere he's passed over for promotion. The position he was hoping for goes to a young woman, Eun-hye (Lee See-won), who proceeds to upset the balance at the office and inspires petty jealousy and gossip.

10 Minutes isn't terribly gripping or creative, but Lee and writer Kim Hey-min do manage to encapsulate the closed-door bickering and vicious after-hours chat-



Baek becomes a victim of office politics.

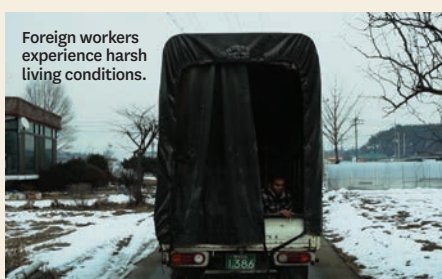
ter of the contemporary workplace. Nowhere is this more perfectly captured than in a sequence at a typical Korean work function, which doubles as an account presentation post-mortem, complete with finger pointing, shaming and buck passing. Aside from that nothing happens in the film that demands sustained attention, which includes Ho-chan's abandonment of his fight for

his job. That the characters are more archetypes than fully realized people doesn't help matters. Adequate performances and minimal forward momentum keep and emotional or intellectual investment at bay.

New Currents

Cast Baek Jong-hwan, Kim Jong-gu, Jung Hee-tae

Director Lee Yong-seung
93 minutes



Foreign workers experience harsh living conditions.

Scenery

Zhang Lu expands on his favorite theme of migrant labor with a documentary about foreign workers in South Korea

BY CLARENCE TSUI

Having made his name with a series of fictional films looking at the trials and tribulations of multi-ethnic lives in China, Zhang Lu continues his exploration into cross-border migration with *Scenery*, which shines a light on foreign laborers in South Korea.

True to its title, the documentary

— Zhang's first after making three feature films over the past decade — is heavy on tableau-like images of landscapes and people toiling in them; static and subtle, its film festival pedigree after *Busan* could also be heightened by possible showings as an installation in exhibitions.

Veering away from the crisis-stricken, dramatic lives depicted in his previous films like *Grain in Ear* (2005) and *Dooman River* (2009), Zhang's subjects in *Scenery* are calm and composed, with the laborers — ranging from a Sri Lankan worker in a furniture workshop to an Uzbek employee in a print-making business — all relating to the camera the dreams they have had while earning their livings abroad.

While homesickness figure largely in their anecdotes, there are also those whose reveries are laced with their diasporic reality: the Bangladeshi worker Bhuiyan (Zhang made a point of naming all his interviewees as a way of recognizing their individuality) dreams

of going to Jeju Island; the Cambodian Choup, meanwhile, experiences her innate fears when she dreams of the road back home becoming flooded and thus barring her return.

But the film ends on a more harrowing note. In a sequence wildly different to what went before, the camera races across busy urban streets and finally ends in a barren back alley, as noises of a man panting are heard on the soundtrack. A representation of foreign workers venting their pent-up frustration, or maybe a depiction of them being pursued by unseen powers of capitalism or government agents checking on their every move? We'll never know: but it's an ominous finale which adds another layer to what is a humanistic record of how it must feel to carve out an existence in a land far away from the familiar milieus of home.

Wide Angle

Director Zhang Lu
95 minutes

PROMOTION

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